

Create Economic Prosperity

Provide for Equitable Development

CITY OF VILLAGES

Provide Public Facilities

Protect the Natural Environment

Increase Mobility



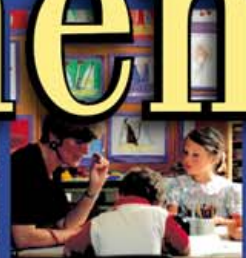
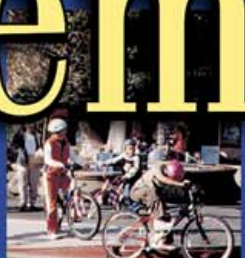
Increase Housing Affordability

Strategic Framework Element

Enhance Our Neighborhoods

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Provide for Equitable Development



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Protect the Natural Environment

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CITY OF SAN DIEGO
GENERAL PLAN

FINAL DRAFT JUNE 2002

Provide Public Facilities

Create Economic Prosperity

Strategic Framework Element



Approved by:
City of San Diego Council
June 2002
Resolution Number:
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Preface

San Diego has the location and the physical foundation in general for an important, perhaps a great city. Its people are awake to its needs, and are resolved to meet them.

John Nolen, 1908

Planning consultant John Nolen wrote these words as a preface to San Diego's first grand vision statement of the 20th century. He looked at a young city with a population less than 40,000 and imagined what it could become.

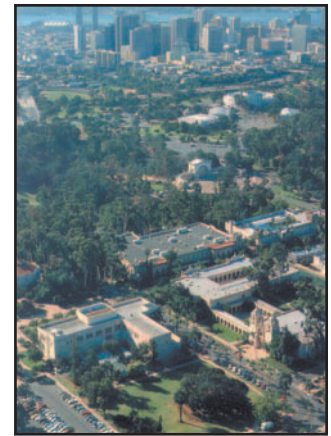
Against the backdrop of what Nolen considered San Diego's "permanent attractiveness beyond all other communities," he envisioned development of a civic center of downtown public buildings, more urban open space, parks and playgrounds, and a bay front with promenades and public amenities. He urged San Diegans to build a city that capitalized on its many natural assets and enviable climate.

Nolen's goals are still relevant today and they advised many of the planning decisions that shaped San Diego in the past century.

Since the Nolen Plan was commissioned, San Diego grew from a small border town to a thriving metropolis. Our economic base evolved from tourism and defense to include high-technology research and manufacturing and international trade. Our population grew to nearly 1.3 million people and we spread across the land, creating the many distinct neighborhoods in which we live and work today.

San Diego is still envied for its climate and natural landforms. It is not uncommon to hear the region described as a "paradise" of beaches, bays, canyons, mountains and deserts. The latter part of the 20th century saw unprecedented efforts in environmental preservation as San Diego worked to preserve open space for critical species and habitat.

A century later, San Diego is once again anticipating its future and defining a new strategy for the way we will live on the land for the next 20 to 50 years. The challenges of the 21st century will require new approaches, innovative solutions and sound public policies.



In 2002, less than ten percent of our developable land remained for future construction and it became clear that adopted land use plans would not provide enough housing, public facilities and services for San Diego's growing population. In the future, development will no longer occur on the fringes of the city. San Diego will begin a process, familiar to mature cities, of turning inward, revitalizing our older communities and accommodating our inevitable future growth within our existing neighborhoods. There is strong consensus that future development must respect the city's natural landforms and preserve valuable open spaces.



In the coming years and for the first time in our city's history, our population will increase more from natural increase (births minus deaths) than from migration. According to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), our population will grow by an estimated 382,000 people by the year 2025. Most of these "newcomers" will be the children and grandchildren of San Diego's residents. The 2000 Census also confirmed there is no ethnic majority in San Diego. San Diego is a truly multicultural city that will become even more diverse in the future.

So, how do we plan for the changes and challenges ahead? Through continued collaboration.

Planning Ahead, Together

The specific strategy outlined in the Strategic Framework Element is the product of intensive public collaboration over a three-year period from 1999 to 2002. More than 50 citizens of diverse and accomplished backgrounds worked to shape the recommendations herein. Thousands of others provided valuable input in public hearings, public workshops, local community planning group meetings, public forums, and through a City of Villages website.

The heart of the City of Villages strategy is in its mission: to preserve and build upon what is good in each of San Diego's unique neighborhoods.

San Diego is ranked among the largest and most vital cities in the world. The challenges we face are shared by major cities here and abroad. As a result, planning in San Diego is shaped by national research, policies and trends, yet our solutions must be local. They must capitalize on the unique and treasured assets of our communities. They must strengthen neighborhoods, not diminish them.

San Diego needs a well defined strategy for investing finite city resources for the greatest public benefit. This strategy will help to accomplish that objective and ensure the future prosperity of the City and its residents. If successfully implemented, the City of Villages strategy will be a testament to Nolen's original vision of San Diego.

This Strategic Framework Element contains a shared vision of tomorrow's San Diego: a City that is a thriving metropolis, yet at its heart, remains a *City of Villages*.



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I. Executive Summary

Background

Timely and effective planning is critical to assist a city in its evolution, as well as to protect the health, safety and welfare of its residents.

Recognizing this, the State of California requires that each city have a general plan to guide its future growth and development. The state also requires each city to update its general plan periodically to ensure relevance and utility.

The City of San Diego is initiating an update to its *Progress Guide and General Plan* with the Strategic Framework Element, which will begin the first comprehensive update since 1979. Several factors that influenced the timing of this update include:

- The City's population is projected to increase by approximately 382,000 people by 2020.
- Less than ten percent of the City's land is vacant and available for new development, meaning the City must shift from developing vacant land to reinvesting in existing communities.
- The City faces a significant shortfall in public facilities and services.
- The need to address traffic congestion and other quality of life concerns.
- Housing is increasingly unaffordable and unavailable.

The Strategic Framework Element

This planning effort affords the City an opportunity to prepare a comprehensive strategy to address its challenges so that it can achieve its primary goal: to improve the quality of life for current and future generations of San Diegans.

This Strategic Framework Element provides the overall structure to guide the General Plan update, including future community plan amendments and implementation of a five-year action plan. The Strategic Framework Element represents the City's new approach for shaping how the City will grow while attempting to preserve the character of its communities and its most-treasured natural resources and amenities.

City of Villages Overview

The essence of the Strategic Framework Element is the City of Villages strategy, a wide-ranging approach to improving the quality of life for all San Diegans. The strategy addresses the urban development trends of the past and the challenges of the near future, while outlining implementation strategies for the continued growth of the City beyond the year 2020. The focus of the strategy is determining where and how new growth and redevelopment occur to ensure the long-term environmental, social, and economic health of the City and its many communities.

The strategy seeks to target growth in village areas. Conceptually, the City of Villages reinforces and enhances the existing patterns of development found in the City's communities. It draws upon the strengths of San Diego's natural environment, neighborhoods, commercial hubs and employment centers and utilizes existing and new village centers for further intensification. The City's single-family neighborhoods are unaffected as higher-density redevelopment is directed into five distinct land use districts or village types.

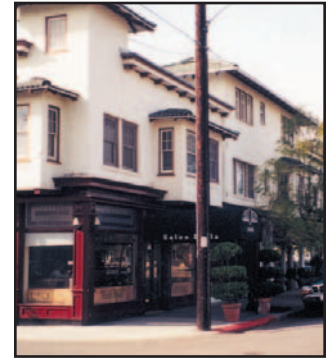
The strategy defines a village as the heart of the community, where residential, commercial, employment and civic uses are integrated. Villages are to be pedestrian-friendly and have inviting public spaces for community events. Villages will offer a variety of housing types and densities and be supported by excellent transit service and public facilities such as schools and parks. No two villages will be alike—each will be unique to the community in which it is located.



Village Types

There are five distinct village types identified on the draft City of Villages Map:

- 1) **The Regional Center** (Downtown San Diego) is the administrative, legal, and cultural center of the region, and is an appropriate location for the highest density housing and most intense, mixed-used development served by multi-modal transportation systems.
- 2) **Subregional Districts**, such as Mission Valley and Otay Mesa, are major employment or commercial districts with adjacent multifamily residential uses, served by major transportation systems.
- 3) **Urban Village Centers**, such as Hazard Center in Mission Valley, are more focused development areas within Subregional Districts that have an intense mix of employment, commercial and higher density residential uses near transit hubs.
- 4) **Neighborhood Village Centers**, exemplified by the Uptown area and found in most communities in the City, are neighborhood-oriented areas of varying sizes featuring local commercial, office, personal services, public-gathering spaces and a variety of multifamily residential uses.
- 5) **Transit Corridors**, such as El Cajon Boulevard and Garnet Avenue, are the commercial “main streets” found in many urbanized communities that can be revitalized to serve as linkages between village centers.



Regional Collaboration

The City of Villages is designed to complement and support other long-range, growth-management strategies in the region. The City continues to work closely with the County of San Diego and regional planning entities, including the San Diego Association of Governments and the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB). In fact, MTDB's strategic plan for future transit service, Transit First, is intrinsically linked to the City of Villages strategy. Two examples of the benefits of the regional coordination associated with the City of Villages are: 1) the real potential to limit sprawl in outlying areas of the county, and 2) a significantly superior transit system that can provide more choices for San Diegans to move about the City.

Vision and Values

The City of Villages is based upon a vision and a set of core values that were shaped by the people of San Diego. Prior to adoption of the Strategic Framework Element, the City undertook a comprehensive public outreach effort involving thousands of citizens who have participated in nearly 200 meetings since 1999. The vision and core values for the City of Villages were crafted through input from these citizens and the guidance of a 40-person citizen committee. The fourteen core values encompass broad areas such as the physical environment, the economy, culture, and society. These core values provided the foundation for the policy direction found in the City of Villages strategy.



Policy Direction

Some of the main policy recommendations based upon the vision and core values include:

Urban Form Policy Recommendations

- Allow the natural environment to define and shape the City's form.
- Create diverse village centers to accept intense commercial and residential development.

Neighborhood Quality Policy Recommendations

- Maintain the distinctive character of communities and preserve single-family neighborhoods.
- Increase walkability in City neighborhoods.

Public Facilities Policy Recommendations

- Facilitate development patterns that can be served by adequate infrastructure.
- Focus infrastructure investments in communities that demonstrate a need for such resources.

Conservation and Environmental Policy Recommendations

- Conserve, protect and restore natural resources.
- Encourage efficient land use and development.

Mobility Policy Recommendations

- Integrate land use and transportation planning to improve mobility.
- Support plans that make transit a viable option for peak and non-peak trips.

Housing Supply and Affordability Policy Recommendations

- Ensure that the housing supply accommodates future population growth.
- Balance the distribution of affordable housing among communities.

Economic Prosperity and Regionalism Policy Recommendations

- Retain and attract businesses that diversify the economic base and offer high-quality employment opportunities.
- Lead regional collaboration and strengthen border relations.

Equitable Development Policy Recommendations

- Create and maintain stable, economically and socially diverse communities through means that distribute equitably the costs and benefits of development.
- Ensure that residents can afford to remain in their community when it is improved.

City of Villages Implementation Action Plan

The core values and policies serve as guiding principles for the goals and implementation actions identified in the Strategic Framework Element Five-Year Action Plan. The Action Plan is a companion document to the Strategic Framework Element. It outlines the work program proposed to implement the City of Villages strategy. The Action Plan identifies actions to be taken, the lead department(s) to further the action, whether staff funding is available to work on the item, potential public and private sector partners who should be involved, and which Action Items have the highest priority for implementation. Major action items identified in the Action Plan include updating other elements of the General Plan and the City's community plans. It also recommends actions to revise, reexamine, and create new City policies, regulations, standards, and processes so that they are consistent with the Element. In addition, the Action Plan directs that a financing strategy be prepared and that new revenue sources be secured to implement key components of the Strategic Framework Element, such as infrastructure improvements and increased village amenities.



Pilot Villages

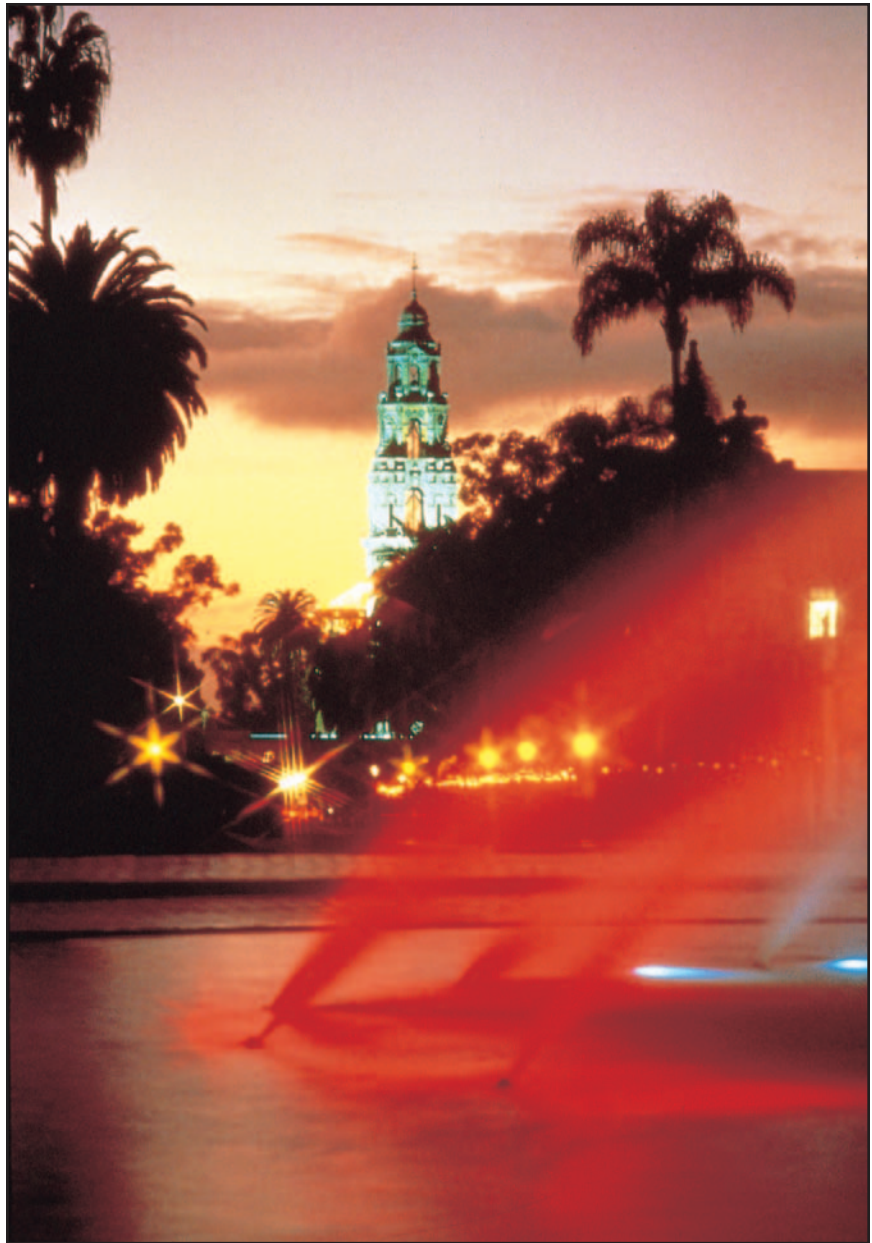
The City of Villages will be phased in over a 20-plus year period, starting with approximately three pilot projects. The City Council will choose three sites based upon the results of a two-part selection process. These sites will exhibit the best features of the City of Villages concept and are expected to be fully functioning village centers in three to five years. The City will partner with communities, government agencies, private property owners, and developers to implement the City of Villages strategy in a timely fashion in the selected locations. The designation of additional villages and preparation of detailed plans for districts, village centers and transit corridors will occur through a public and broad based community plan update and amendment process.



Financing

One of the greatest challenges in implementing the City of Villages will be providing the necessary public facilities and services for growing neighborhoods. Local community planning groups and citizens indicate that any higher density development must be accompanied by sufficient parks, schools, police services, sewer lines, and public transit. Furthermore, the City faces an approximately \$2.5 billion (2001 dollars) shortfall in public facilities and infrastructure already identified in current community plans. The City estimates that more than \$100 million in additional revenue per year over the next 20 years will be needed to finance this shortfall. *It is important to note that this shortfall will exist whether or not the City of Villages strategy is adopted or implemented.*

Given this scenario, delivering any new services while financing current facility shortfalls will require new funding sources and may require refocusing City resources into communities with the highest concentrations of jobs or housing. With the guidance of the Strategic Framework Citizen Committee, City staff is preparing financing strategies to address the shortfall and identifying potential funding sources for new or upgraded facilities. Ultimately, however, San Diego voters will choose how to finance public facilities and infrastructure needs.



II. Introduction

Planning is critical to assist a city in its evolution, as well as to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. Recognizing this, the State of California requires each city to have a General Plan to guide its future, and mandates through the Government Code that the plan be periodically updated to assure relevance and utility. In 1979, the City Council adopted the *Progress Guide and General Plan* to guide its future through a comprehensive set of policies that addressed major public concerns including housing, redevelopment, land conservation, public safety, parks, streets, libraries, and other public facilities. The Strategic Framework Element will guide the update of the entire 1979 *Progress Guide and General Plan*, including future community plans, and implementation of a Five-Year Action Plan. The Strategic Framework Element contains a strategy called the “City of Villages” to direct future growth as San Diego shifts from an era of building upon abundant open land to one of reinvesting in existing communities.

The *Guidelines for Future Development*, which this Element replaces, primarily addressed development of vacant land and was largely successful in ensuring that new communities were built with adequate public facilities. However, the guidelines did not focus on an implementation program to provide public facilities upgrades concurrent with infill growth in the older communities. As of 2002, development has consumed the majority of developable vacant land within the City’s limits. The Guidelines, therefore, are out of date, and are largely irrelevant for directing future growth and development. New strategies are needed to address existing public facilities shortfalls and growth pressures. The Strategic Framework Element provides guidance to meet housing and employment needs and to preserve and enhance San Diego’s neighborhoods. The Element describes how the City can enhance its many communities and neighborhoods as growth occurs over time. This Element does not encourage or mandate a specific amount of growth.

The Strategic Framework Element offers new policy directions in the areas of urban form, neighborhood character, historic preservation, public facilities, conservation, mobility, housing affordability, economic prosperity, and equitable development. It addresses the urban development trends of the past and the challenges of the future. It also outlines implementation strategies and considers the continued growth of the City beyond the year 2020.

Most important, the strategy is based upon the vision and core values of those who shaped it: the people of San Diego.

Partnerships in Planning: A Regional Approach

The City of Villages strategy is designed to complement and support long-range growth management strategies throughout the region. The City continues to coordinate and work closely with regional planning entities including the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB). The objective of increasing residential and employment concentrations in areas with the best existing and future transit connections supports SANDAG's regional planning goals and MTDB's transit vision.



The *County 2020 Plan* proposes to focus development in existing or planned towns and to decrease growth in rural areas. The General Plans for several of the smaller cities in the region also call for intensifying development near existing downtowns and activity centers. Concepts similar to those in the City of Villages strategy are being used to plan developing communities in other cities and the unincorporated areas of the county.

The City of San Diego plays a leading role in regional planning. This role includes working with other cities and agencies in refining the regional arterial transportation network, expanding transit services, developing a long-term airport solution for the region, assuring availability of adequate sources of water and utilities for urban needs, and achieving goals for a regional open space network. Beginning in the 1990s, officials representing the cities of San Diego and Tijuana entered into an unprecedented partnership to collaborate on issues that impact citizens on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.

The Opportunities of Future Development

Growth presents the City with many challenges, but it also affords important opportunities as well. Through effective planning, we have the opportunity to leverage projected growth and accomplish the following objectives.

Build upon our existing communities:

- Provide a sufficient population base in key locations to support neighborhood services in the form of local shops, restaurants, businesses, cultural centers, theatres, and other services.
- Emphasize the distinctive character of our communities and neighborhoods through creative urban design and public art.
- Create street level activity and vitality.
- Create public spaces such as pocket parks, squares, greens and plazas, and amphitheaters to help generate a sense of neighborhood and city identity.
- Promote neighborhood schools as a focal point for community residents, community groups and businesses.



Enhance our overall quality of life:

- Provide a connected open space system based on the City's natural landform.
- Plan necessary public facilities and maximize return from public investments.
- Create new affordable housing opportunities while preserving established single-family neighborhoods.
- Reduce pressures to develop rural portions of San Diego County.
- Provide for more efficient use of employment lands.



Increase mobility:

- Support improved transit service, better walkability, improved bicycle facilities, and reduced auto dependence.
- Reduce the need for families to locate outside of the region in search of attainable housing, thereby lessening congestion on area freeways.

The future offers continued opportunities for proactive planning. The places we consider special today, such as Balboa Park, Mission Bay Park and Downtown San Diego are the products of visionary planning efforts of the past.

Investing in Our Communities

One of the greatest challenges in implementing the City of Villages will be providing the public facilities and services our growing neighborhoods require. The voices of our community planning groups and citizens are clear: higher density development must be accompanied by sufficient parks, schools, police services, sewer lines, and public transit. Delivering new services and remedying facility shortfalls of the past will require tapping new funding sources and may even require focusing City resources in communities with the higher concentrations of jobs and housing.

III. Our Values

The following values provide the foundation of the City of Villages strategy. These values were developed with the guidance of the Strategic Framework Citizen Committee and through a year long dialogue with San Diegans in numerous community forums.

Our Physical Environment

We Value:

- The natural environment.
- The City's extraordinary setting, defined by its open spaces, natural habitat and unique topography.
- A future that meets today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- The conservation, preservation, and environmental quality of natural resources.
- Parks and public spaces, accessible by foot, transit, bicycle, and car, as areas for neighborhood, community and regional interaction and convenient recreation.
- The availability of public facilities, infrastructure, transit, information infrastructure, and services as essential to neighborhood quality and as necessary companions to density increases.
- A compact, efficient, and environmentally sensitive pattern of development.
- Walkable communities with tree-lined streets.
- A convenient, efficient, aesthetically pleasing, and multi-modal transportation system.



Our Economy

We value:

- The health, economic prosperity, and well-being of our citizens.
- A diverse economy to achieve a rising standard of living for all San Diegans.
- Mutually beneficial cultural and economic ties with Mexico and our neighbors in Latin America.
- Regional coordination to resolve regional growth issues, and regional collaboration to meet economic prosperity goals.



Our Culture and Society

We value:

- Social equity.
- Safe and secure neighborhoods.
- The physical, social and cultural diversity of our city and its neighborhoods.
- Housing affordability throughout the City and an overall diversity of housing types and costs.
- Schools as an integral part of our neighborhoods and equitable access to quality educational institutions.
- The City's multiplicity of arts, cultural, and historical assets.

These core values will provide the foundation for future policy decisions and implementation actions. Quality of life indicators will be established to measure San Diego's progress toward enhancing quality of life in the City. The indicators will be developed and monitored through coordination with various City departments and other public agencies.